

# **US EMBASSY IN ARMENIA**

## **U.S. EMBASSY ADVISORY INFORMATION FOR U.S. STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS**

*Yerevan, Armenia  
May 2013*

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# Before Leaving

## Travel services/obtaining your ticket and visa

There are two ways to get a visa for entry into Armenia: **e-Visa** and **conventional Visa**

**e-Visa:** To apply for and receive an e-Visa, please visit the following site <http://www.mfa.am/evisa/>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia welcomes you to Armenia and invites you to apply for and receive a visa electronically, on-line. The e-visa is the first step in the Virtual Consulate program. Incrementally, other consular services, too, will be available on-line.

The e-Visa system, developed for issuance of electronic visas, interfaces and compares data with other Armenian Government systems. Incorrect or inaccurate information, whether submitted knowingly or unknowingly, in response to any question on the e-Visa application form, may be the basis for rejection and/or cancellation of an e-Visa.

An e-Visa is equivalent to a conventional visa, but no paper is inserted in your passport and there is no need for you to visit an Armenian diplomatic mission to submit an application. Applications for e-Visas can be submitted online, verified on line, and in most cases, e-visas will be approved and issued on-line within two business days. Having valid e-Visa you can arrive Armenia through the following border crossing checkpoints: Ayrum railway station, Bavra, Bagratashen, Gogavan land borders with the Republic of Georgia, Zvartnots International Airport and Meghri land border with Iran.

E-Visas are valid for travel for up to 180 days from date of issue. They are good for a single entry, and a stay of up to up to 120 days. Duration of stay is included in the validity.

The combined application processing and e-Visa fee is the equivalent of US \$10 or US \$40 in depend of the visa type.

### Conventional Visa: Application Guidelines

#### Document Requirements

To travel to Armenia, an applicant must obtain a visa from the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Washington, DC, or the Consulate General in Los Angeles. \*

To obtain a visa through the Embassy, applicants are required to submit the following paperwork to the Consular Section:

1. A filled out **visa application form** (one per applicant).
2. One recent professional color passport-size photograph, stapled or glued to the application form
3. The original Passport valid for at least the next 6 months

4. Money order or certified check payable to the Embassy of Armenia (no cash or personal checks can be accepted).

### **Notes:**

If applying by mail, applicants are responsible for the cost of the return shipment. It can be either a prepaid return envelope of any **registered mail with a tracking number** or a separate money order in the amount of \$ 20 to cover the cost of the FedEx services.

*The Embassy of the Republic of Armenia cannot be held responsible for documents lost in the mail.*

\* Residents of the following states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Washington are advised to address to the Consulate General in Los Angeles:

**346N. Central Ave.,  
Glendale, CA 91203**

**Tel.: (818) 265-5900**

**Fax: (818) 265-3800**

**Email: [info@armeniaconsulatela.org](mailto:info@armeniaconsulatela.org)**

Residents of all other states in the United States may address inquiries to the Embassy in Washington, DC.

[Embassy of the Republic of Armenia](#)

**2225 R Street, NW**

**Washington, DC 20008**

**Tel: (202)319-1976**

**Fax: (202) 319-2982**

**Email: [amembusadm@msn.com](mailto:amembusadm@msn.com)**

### **Duration of Stay**

No letter of invitation is required from Armenia to obtain a single-entry tourist visa for a stay up to 120 days. For stays of longer than 120 days or any other type of visa, an official invitation is required. \*\*

For stays longer than 120 days, an applicant will have to apply for an extension or to the Passport and Visa Department at the Police Service of Armenia for a Temporary Residence Card (Address – 13 A Mashtots Street, Yerevan, Armenia; Tel. (3741) 53-43-91 or (3741) 52-14-16).

Transit visa is required if Armenia is a stopping point to travel on to other countries. This type of visa can be obtained only in case of having basic visa. Transit visa is valid for three days.

### **Need More Information?**

To obtain additional information about visa processing, or to check the status of your application, or to confirm the fees you may call (202) 319-2983, between 10 a.m. and noon, Monday through Friday (except Wednesday) or visit the web page of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Armenia at <http://www.mfa.am/>

*\*\* Only an invitation verified by the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (for business trips) or the Passport and Visa Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Armenia (for private trips) is considered to be official.*

## **VISA/RESIDENCY PERMITS FOR GRANTEES IN ARMENIA**

If grantees have not applied for visas in the U.S. upon arrival they can obtain a 120-day single-entry visa at the airport for AMD15000.

U.S. Program grantees apply either for one-year residency permits or 120-day visas. That has been the requirement of the RA Police Visa and Passport department (OVIR).

**One year residency permits** (applicable only to those grantees who are staying for 9 months or longer):

- ❖ To obtain a residency permit for one year you have to submit the following documents to the RA Police Visa and Passport department (OVIR):
  - Copy of your passport and the Armenian notary translation
  - Medical clearance card. You can either go to the hospital for medical checkup or you may call to the U.S. Embassy Medical Officer Dr. Pirouzyan at: 091 400965, he is aware of this procedure.
  - Three passport size colored photos (3.5.x 4.5)
  - Letter from the University requiring a temporary residency permits for you (a sample letter can be availed to you and/or your University). In the letter it should be mentioned that it is for consideration for Mr. Hovhannes Kocharyan, Head of Visa and Passports Division of Armenian Police (OVIR) in Armenian.
  - If you are a lecturer, an agreement from the University should be submitted as well.
  - Payment for temporary residency permits is 105 000 AMD. (it is FREE of Charge for students and lecturers)
  - Two application forms in Armenian (if there is no Armenian who can assist with filling out those applications, there is a Xerox office in front of OVIR building, where you can ask to help you to fill them out, it might cost either 1000 or 2000 AMD)

It's better to take all above mentioned documents a month before your visa expiration date as the whole process will take for about 20-25 days (about one month).

**Contact person at OVIR: Ruzanna, Inspector (his room is on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Tel: 098331101.)**

## **120-day multi-entry visa**

- ❖ If the Fulbrighter is a researcher (either student or lecturer) s/he cannot receive a residency permit for one year. In that case s/he should apply for 120 day multi-entry visa (Room #204), which will cost 40000AMD (the payment can be done at OVIR on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor via machine), fill out one application form and submit a letter from the University. \* In this case we would recommend requesting the university to include in the letter that the grantee is either a student or a lecturer, which will make things less complicated.
- ❖ For a short stay in Armenia, the visa can be prolonged for 60 days. In that case the following documents should be submitted:
  - Application form

- A letter from the University
- Payment for visa

\*If you should stay longer after receiving 120 day visa (a month or two) in that case you should leave the country close to the date of visa expiration (you may travel to Georgia) and get a new visa on the border on your way back to Armenia.

\*\*In case a grantee applies to extend his/her visa or residency permit after its expiration, s/he should go to OVIR #204 (second floor), write a declaration in Armenian (can be done at the XEROX place in front of OVIR), pay a fine (between 50000-100000AMD, the actual amount is calculated by the OVIR officer) and fill out one application form for visa extension (a grantee may apply for a multi-entry visa for 60 days for 20000AMD.)

## **Health Insurance and Immunization guidelines**

Please see the General Terms and Conditions section of your contract for full details regarding Health Insurance topic.

Although the government of Armenia or the US Embassy in Armenia does not require proof of vaccinations for entry into the country, it is advisable that you be up to date. When in doubt, check with the CDC hotline at 404-332-4559 or their website: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for a listing of area specific vaccination recommendations. If you have particular or specific health needs and concerns, please consult with your doctor prior to your trip.

## **Instructions for Shipment of Book and Educational Materials**

Grantees may send only books and educational materials to their host country via the Department of State's diplomatic pouch on a one-time (outbound ONLY - that is, from the U.S. to the host country) basis, IF authorized to do so by the U.S. Embassy in that country. Use of the diplomatic pouch is a privilege which, if abused, can be withdrawn by the U.S. Department of State. It is important that grantees and the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy overseas adhere to the rules governing use of the pouch. Again, the pouch is a one-time, one-way privilege offered prior to arrival in-country. The pouch may not be used during your grant year nor for return shipments to the U.S. at the end of your grant year.

Please adhere closely to the instructions below. Boxes rejected by the Department of State because of improper size, contents, or packaging will be returned to the return address on the box. There is no way to insure boxes sent through the pouch system or to trace items lost in the pouch mail system. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which administers the programs, cannot retrieve and repack overweight/oversized boxes.

## **CONTENTS:**

Packages must contain only books, magazines, notes or other similar educational materials required for the grantee's teaching or research program. Computers, computer parts or accessories and any electronic equipment may not be sent by pouch. Packages may not contain personal effects of any kind. The Department of State may open packages suspected of containing prohibited items. If prohibited items are discovered, the box will be returned to the sender. Grantees should not enclose items that are irreplaceable. The Department of State assumes no responsibility for lost or damaged packages.

Grantees should not ship anything that will be damaged by x-rays because boxes will be x-rayed by the Department of State mail facility.

### **NUMBER, WEIGHT AND SIZE LIMITATIONS FOR BOXES:**

- \* No more than four (4) boxes or padded envelopes per grantee may be sent through the pouch system.
- \* Each box must not exceed 24" in length and total length and girth must not exceed 62".
- \* Each box cannot exceed 40 pounds.

### **WRAPPING:**

Materials must be packed securely in strong cardboard boxes, sealed with heavy-duty packing tape (strapping tape is best), and clearly labeled. It is best to use new boxes with no advertising or confusing labels. Boxes are frequently handled roughly in shipment. Boxes should be packed carefully since torn or broken packages cannot be repacked.

### **ADDRESSING THE PACKAGE:**

- \* In the Upper left-hand corner (Return address):

**Fulbright/ELF Grantee's Name  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip Code**

- \* Mailing Address: **Nancy VanHorn  
Public Affairs Section  
Department of State  
7020 Yerevan Place  
Washington, D.C. 20521-7020**

- \* In the lower left-hand corner of the box write:

**UNCLASSIFIED VIA AIR POUCH  
Fulbright Grantee's Name  
FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS**

NOTE: Please choose a return address where the recipient will know how to contact you and what to do if a box is returned.

- \* In the lower right-hand corner:

Grantees sending only one package should write "1 of 1". Grantees sending more than one package should number each package in a series and circle the markings, e.g., "1 of 4", "2 of 4", "3 of 4" and "4 of 4".

## **SHIPPING:**

Packages can be shipped through the U.S. Postal Service. The "street address" in the address format was created strictly to meet USPS requirements for automated mail sorting; no such street address actually exists. Grantees are responsible for paying domestic postage -- postage from their home to Washington, D.C. United Parcel Service, Federal Express, DHL or other small package carrier can also be used at the grantees expense.

## **TIME REQUIRED FOR SHIPMENT:**

Grantees should anticipate that once packages are received at U.S. Department of State mail center, shipping will take at least a 1-3 weeks, sometimes longer, depending on the location.

**The frequency of pouch shipment is outside the control of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the receiving U.S. Embassy and there is no mechanism for tracking the boxes once they leave the mail center.**

In the past, boxes have occasionally been lost although generally the boxes do arrive safely. However, grantees should understand this possible risk and take this into account when deciding to send boxes through the diplomatic pouch.

## **Packing Tips**

Remember the golden rule: If you absolutely can't live without it, bring it along. This applies to medicines (prescription & over the counter), clothing, and foodstuffs.

### **List of things to pack:**

Most Western brands of food, non-food and personal hygiene products are available at most mini-markets around the city. You can visit the web site of one of the local supermarkets to see the range of products available in Armenia and check the prices /prices may vary  $\pm 100$ -200 AMD depending on store) [www.sas.am](http://www.sas.am). There are several other supermarkets like SAS, STAR, or CITY supermarkets. But if you have any special preferences you should bring them with you.

Drugstores can be found at every corner, and many "prescription" drugs are available over-the-counter, but make sure to consult proper physicians before purchasing anything.

If you are wearing contact lenses or eyeglasses be sure to bring all necessary accessories with you, although eyeglasses are locally available, are much cheaper and are generally OK for simple prescriptions.

Most important be sure to pack a pocket size flashlights. You might need them very frequently in the side streets. If you forget you can always buy one locally.

## **Weather and clothing requirements**

Armenia has a dry climate both in winter and summer with little humidity. Moisturizer, sunscreen and eye drops are extremely useful. Temperatures remain true to the seasons.

Spring (March - May) 50°-80°F - Pleasant jacket weather, sometimes wet, usually sunny.

Summer (June - Aug) 70° -100°F - Hot even at night, very sunny, often buggy but no humidity.

Fall (Sept-Nov.) 50° -70°F - Pleasant jacket weather again, dry, Indian summer, usually nice until Mid-Nov.

Winter (Dec. - Feb.) 20° -40°F Very cold, some snow and ice.

Usually most university classrooms and apartments are not air conditioned and well heated.

Bring light cotton pants/skirts and shirts and Tees. Jeans and sports wear are widely common for walking around town and for excursions. Don't forget to pack a few sets of upscale casual clothing (suits for men) for official functions, receptions, celebrations, the symphony and the opera.

Make sure to pack comfortable walking shoes (sneakers are a good idea) if you are planning to do extensive sightseeing in and around town and to tour the country. Don't plan on buying shoes in Armenia as comfort is regularly sacrificed for what's fashionable and stylish. European made shoes are very expensive.

Armenia has a continental climate, similar to that of the US plains states. Winters are cold, with moderate amounts of snow, and summers are hot and dry. Although the climate is not more extreme than in many US cities, the lack of adequate heating in most buildings heightens the sense of cold. Most apartments have electrical heating. Most university buildings are heated during the winter months (normally mid-November to beginning of March) and are generally comfortable. Most probably gas heaters will be the heating source in your apartment and the monthly bill will be from \$70-120 for a one-bedroom apartment, depending on use.

## Monetary Issues

There are a lot of local banks in Armenia (quite reliable) and several international banks. Among the international banks one that would be probably recognizable for foreign travelers is HSBC. Information about HSBC can be found online at [www.hsbc.com](http://www.hsbc.com). In the majority of cases, the ATM card you use in the US will work in HSBC machines. Western Union, located at 2 Nalbandyan Street (among other locations) near Republic Square, offers wire transfers to and from Armenia.

One US dollar is equivalent to about 410 Armenian Drams ([www.cba.am](http://www.cba.am)). Just be aware that the rate is instable.

Although the most practical and convenient way to do business in Armenia is by cash, credit cards are becoming more and more popular (Visa, MasterCard, and American Express). ATM machines are widely available for 24 hours in the downtown and more limited in other parts of the city.

You could cash traveler's checks at the major banks, but be prepared for hefty service charges.

**PLEASE NOTE: If you bring cash please bring bills printed recently.**

## Upon Arrival

### Getting through the airport/meeting the driver

You will arrive at Zvartnotz Airport. The new Arrival Hall corresponds to Western standards! Please let the U.S. Embassy know if you need an airport pick-up. If you would like to request an airport pick-up from the Embassy please provide your itinerary 2 weeks in advance. The service with an Embassy contracted travel agency – Globe Travel – will cost you \$6. The driver will be waiting for you when you

exit from customs area. Do not expect anybody in the runway or in the luggage area. In Armenia these areas are restricted to passengers and staff. So once you are out of the customs area look for the sign with your name or one that says "Globe Travel".

As you descend from your plane, follow the crowd inside to the immigration area and stay in whatever line that has already formed. Not everyone on your plane will be heading for the immigration officer's booth first, as they will need to go to the visa window to obtain a visa. Because you already have your visa, ignore this line. The visa window is clearly marked so there should be no confusion on your part. Besides there are people in uniform that you can address to for additional information.

The value of queuing is interpreted differently and other passengers may try to cut you off. More and more officers and personnel speak English.

After passing through immigration, head to the luggage conveyer belts. Waiting for your bags should not take long.

There are luggage carts available for the use of the passengers that come with and without porter for a nominal charge. The fees are posted in Armenian dram, which of course, you won't have. Expect to pay 800 dram, approx. \$3, for a cart and 2500 dram, approx. \$7.00 with a porter. These prices are subject to change and you might be charged a bit more since they will use a different exchange rate and don't carry change. Use your discretion for tipping since you only need help to get through customs-a short walk away. In the past dollar bills were ok to pay for the services at the airport. However, the Armenian government passed a law prohibiting transactions in currencies other than the Armenian dram. So it is very possible that you are asked to exchange your dollar bills to drams to pay for carts and/or porters. Check this on spot.

Keep your baggage claim checks handy as you leave the luggage carousel. An airport staff member will compare the claim checks with the luggage tags and then will take the claim checks from you and let you go. They may ask you what is inside and why you are traveling to Armenia. Explain that you are on a US Embassy program and come to Armenia for program purposes. If you have a problem with your luggage (lost or damaged), this is the time to find the airline representative and file a claim form. They generally hang out around the luggage carousel in case of any problems.

Customs has a green channel and a red channel: go through the green channel unless you have something to claim. Exiting the customs area, you will be mobbed by cab drivers and people looking for their loved ones. Refuse any offers of help. The Globe Travel Agency (embassy official travel agency) with a sign will help you get everything to the vehicle. They will take you directly to a hotel/apartment/house per your request.

## Electricity

Standard voltage in Armenia is 220V/50Hz (vs. 110V/60Hz in the US). Laptops whose power supply indicates "CE" can run on both 110 and 220V without a transformer and will just need a plug adaptor. For any other equipment that you may bring with you it is advisable to bring a suitable transformer. Transformers may be purchased in Armenia, but their quality and safety can vary. For small home electronics (a coffee grinder, toaster, etc.), local appliance shops carry a variety of European models. The prices are higher than in the US, but it is always possible to acquire something locally that may otherwise be cumbersome to carry. It is a good idea to bring a surge protector, especially for computers used at home, as voltage may fluctuate at times. The electric outlets in Armenia are European style.

You may bring plug adaptors for equipment made in the USA or purchase it in transit or in Armenia. They are widely available in electronic stores around town.

## Water

Armenians drink tap water. However, for foreigners it is a good idea to drink bottled water in Yerevan during short-term visits. Large jugs of bottled water such as Ayg, Aparan, Byuregh (common local brands) are available at any store. This is essentially water from the city water sources in the mountains that has been filtered and disinfected, then bottled for distribution.

Most districts of Yerevan don't have 24-hour water. Be considerate and conserve water whenever possible at private homes. In homes, many people have water tanks or keep water "stored" in bathtubs for use. Usually there is a bucket then for "flushing" the toilet, if you're not sure how a system works you can always ask. Just be aware that water is a valuable commodity here.

## How to get to the Embassy

As the new embassy compound is far from the downtown and business center of Yerevan you might need to use public transportation or taxi to get to the Embassy. There are many on-call taxi services and depending on the location the price may vary from 1000-2000 drams. There are public minibuses that have routes to the embassy and back here are some of them which you can access from Opera Square minibus station 100, 94, 99, 77, 113, 13.

### Embassy of the United States of America

1 American Avenue  
Yerevan 0082, Republic of Armenia  
Telephone: (+374) 10 464-700  
Fax: (+374) 10 464-742

## Orientation

Within approximately two weeks from your arrival, you and your family members /if they are accompanying you/ will have a security briefing at the embassy. Also approximately at the same time you will meet the program coordinator (normally within the first week) and will be able to discuss details of your program. During the first meeting with the program coordinator you will be given a Welcome kit with primary and most necessary information about Yerevan and Armenia.

Your program coordinator at the U.S. Embassy is Hasmik Mikayelyan, Cultural/Education Specialist, Public Affairs Section. Her contact info is +374-10-494410 (office), +374-55-057432 (cell) and [mikayelyhb@state.gov](mailto:mikayelyhb@state.gov).

## Useful links

<http://armenia.usembassy.gov/>  
[www.armeniainfo.am](http://www.armeniainfo.am)

### US Embassy in Armenia

Everything about Armenia: travel, lodging & dining, entertainment & culture, sites of interests. Includes info on hostels. Previous Fulbright grantees have stayed at Envoy hostel and were happy with it.

<a href="http://www.armeniaemb.org">www.armeniaemb.org</a>	Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Washington
<a href="http://www.lragir.am">www.lragir.am</a>	internet news service
<a href="http://www.menuatours.com">www.menuatours.com</a>	Menua Tours: guide services, reservations, tour packages
<a href="http://www.aua.am">www.aua.am</a>	American University of Armenia home page
<a href="http://www.cilicia.com">www.cilicia.com</a>	Extensive Armenia information and links
<a href="http://www.internews.am">www.internews.am</a>	Internews Armenia, internet based grassroots news service
<a href="http://www.spyur.am">www.spyur.am</a>	Spyur Information Service, business phone listings, links
<a href="http://www.agbu.org">www.agbu.org</a>	Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) home page
<a href="http://www.info.usaid.gov/countries/am">www.info.usaid.gov/countries/am</a>	USAID in Armenia
<a href="http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/regions.htm">www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/regions.htm</a>	World Bank in Armenia
<a href="http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/armenia.htm">www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/armenia.htm</a>	United Nations in Armenia
<a href="http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html">www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html</a>	CIA Country Profile
<a href="http://www.travel.state.gov">www.travel.state.gov</a>	Travel Information, consular information sheets
<a href="http://www.cdc.gov">www.cdc.gov</a>	Center for Disease Control
<a href="http://www.matenadaran.am">www.matenadaran.am</a>	(EXCELLENT SITE) Virtual Matenadaran Museum
<a href="http://www.groong.com">www.groong.com</a>	Armenian news network
<a href="http://www.theforgotten.org">www.theforgotten.org</a>	Armenian Genocide information
<a href="http://www.genocide-museum.am">www.genocide-museum.am</a>	Armenian Genocide Museum Institute
<a href="http://www.gov.am">www.gov.am</a>	Official website of the Armenian Government
<a href="http://www.armeniaguide.com">www.armeniaguide.com</a>	Has just about everything
<a href="http://www.armeniadiaspora.com">www.armeniadiaspora.com</a>	Another site with just about everything
<a href="http://www.sci.am">www.sci.am</a>	National Academy of Sciences in Armenia